



## HERE COMES THE BRIDE! SELL IT TO HER!

Portraits, Pianos, Press Clippings, Insurance, Cakes, Lingerie, Stationery, Even Toys for a Future Generation, Are Included in That "It"

By FREDERICK VAN de WATER  
Illustrations by Albert Levering

Matrimony Is Not To Be Lightly or Unadvisedly Approached, but the Really Serious Thing in Life Is the Engagement Announcement

"OF COURSE," Althea said bravely, "it will have to be the simplest sort of a wedding. You don't mind."

"No," we responded with real fervor. "Just the two immediate families," she continued, "and a handful of old friends—the ones who really care."

"Yes," we answered as above. "And then, afterward, when it's all over, we can send out announcements to the other people we will have to notify."

"We will," we agreed with all the solemnity of an oath taking.

"So," she summed up with that smile that made your collar too small for you, "there need be none of the terrible fuss and annoyance and interference and—everything that comes with big weddings."

"Big weddings are such public things. They are really hateful and very vulgar, I think."

"And, besides," she added with a sigh, "we can't afford one."

"No," we responded with cumulative fervor.

"I suppose," we ventured after a pause filled with matters of no public concern, "that there won't have to be any announcement of the engagement, either?"

"Oh, yes," said Althea hastily. "There must be. Father is seeing to that, but it will be the very shortest sort of an announcement and only our friends will read it, anyway. Nobody reads engagement announcements."

"Our wedding," she said dreamily, "will be almost like a great, wonderful secret that only those who love us know about."

If the society editor who was pasting the little announcement far down toward the foot of his column could have heard us, how sarcastically he would have grinned! If the postman had known of it, how he would have groaned in anticipation!

How the photographers, the hotel managers, the department store heads, the furniture dealers, the stationery store keepers, the caterers, the florists, the dry cleaners, the orchestra leaders, the storage warehouse men, the real estate agents and several score representatives of other trades and businesses would have snickered!

What fools we were!

But, after all, it was the first time we'd been married. How could we be expected to know of the deep-seated love that all merchants yearn to profess for lovers? How could we guess the pathetic eagerness they cherish to crowd the threshold of matrimony with representatives whose one aim in life is to call at one's convenience with samples which it is certain will delight and satisfy?

Heed this one word of warning, you prospective bridegrooms who wish a quiet, unheralded courtship and marriage, and you brides-to-be who say you do:

Marry before your engagements are announced and then go away, leaving no address.

"The announcement didn't get in, did it?" we said guilelessly to Althea, a few mornings thereafter, over the telephone. "I suppose we aren't important enough for the papers to think it worth while."

"Oh, but it did," she contradicted. "It was right in the society column in The Sphere, and The Planet had a headline on it 'Miss Blank to Wed.' Isn't that exciting? I looked for it in The Sphere and I didn't find it, either, but we got a postcard just now telling us it was there, and I looked again and found it."

"A postcard?"

She read it triumphantly. It was from a clipping bureau, and ran:

"Did your press clipping bureau send you an item, in which you are mentioned, from a recent issue of The New York Sphere? If not it was a flagrant oversight. We can give you this item for 10 cents, or, if you subscribe, we will read every newspaper and magazine in America for you and include this item in your first 100 items."

"It's a mistake," we said fatuously. "It was meant for some one else."

Possibly the evil children of earth ventured some such remark at the first few raindrops that presaged the flood.

That was Tuesday morning. It was an excited Althea who met us that evening, a little disheveled and more than a little hoarse.

"The telephone," she moaned, after greeting us, "the telephone!" and cast a vindictive glance at that innocent appearing instrument.

"The service," we replied profoundly, "is rotten."

"Oh, it isn't the service," she said despairingly. "It's been ringing all day long. From morning until now mother and I have been answering it."

"But why?" we persisted.

"Why?" shrieked Althea, almost hysterically. "Photographers; that's why. Photographers and photographers and photog—"

At this point the telephone interrupted. With a gesture of despair Althea dropped into a chair. "Another!" she groaned.

An echoing moan came from the nearby room where her mother sat.

With the air of one who defends suffering



womankind we grasped the offending instrument.

"Miss Blank?" a voice queried. It was a very nice voice, indeed.

"Who wants her?" we said in our best manner.

"The MacPherson Galleries speaking," was the reply.

We turned to Althea. She shook her head dumbly.

"Can I take the message?" we replied. It was hard to be abrupt to so pleasant a voice.

"Oh, Mr. Blank," it said, jumping at conclusions, "we want to know when Miss Blank can give us a sitting. It would be a great favor if you would let our photographer call at your home at any time. Of course, we would possibly get better results if she could arrange to come to our studio."

"But," we stammered, "I don't think she wants any pictures. She doesn't."

"All brides want their pictures taken," said the voice firmly. "There is no obligation attached, Mr. Blank. We only want permission to submit pictures of Miss Blank to you, and, of course, the newspapers."

"No," said Althea, and continued to repeat it while we argued with the importunate but very pleasant voice. When we had finally heard it promise to telephone again in the hope of reaching Miss Blank, we hung up and wiped the perspiration from our brow.

"That," said Althea tragically, "has been going on since early morning. There have been seventeen photographers!"

"Nineteen; this makes twenty," corrected her mother's voice wearily, but with a touch of pride.

"There have been twenty photographers," Althea pursued, "who have called up to-day. All of them want to take my picture. None of them will take no for an answer."

"But, why," we began, and then corrected ourselves hastily. "I can understand why every one should want your picture, dear, but why all this rush to-day?"

"Those engagement notices," Althea responded, "and they want me to buy a piano."

"The photographers?" we queried, helplessly.

"No, silly," she answered. "The Peckman Hard Company. Here's the letter."

It was a beautifully engraved missive and began:

"You who are at the threshold of your married life no doubt realize the necessity of selecting wisely the piano that is to form such an essential part of your future home."

"But neither of us plays," we protested.

"That's just what I told the man."

"What man?"

"One of their salesmen telephoned. He says he thinks he has just the instrument we need. I had a terrible time convincing him we didn't need a piano."

"I suppose," she added thoughtfully, "that it is true that no home is complete without one. We can't play, of course, but later, if—"

This when we were still debating whether we would be able to get a set of dining room furniture into the little flat we had engaged!

Before we left that evening the postman on his last round had brought Althea two more letters. One of these began:

"Your name has reached us through the publication of coming social events. Every woman knows the problem of furnishing her own home is most interesting and important."

Another from a person who, according to his letterhead, dealt in "interior furnishings" started off:

"Brides of national prominence for almost half a century have permitted us to attend to the preparation of their wedding outfits."

Althea scoffed at this. It is still my conviction she rather liked it. So did her mother, who also got a similar communication from the interior furnisher. Althea's father was not home, so his was left for him to open. The wily furnisher was determined not to overlook a single bet.

There was a note pinned on our bureau when



Poor girl, she had learned by weeks of bitterness how advertising pays. And in the case of engagement announcements, as well as in melodrama, it's the woman who pays and pays and pays

we reached home that night. Mr. J. Byworthy Gumpus, this informed us, had telephoned twice during the evening and would call again before 8 the following morning. We dreamed of Mr. Gumpus that night and woke to the information that he was on the phone.

Beautiful telephone manners had Mr. Gumpus and an amazingly smooth flow of English. He admitted after assiduous apologies for disturbing us that he represented the Analytical Insurance Company. He deplored the persistence of insurance agents in general and instead of following us about and annoying us—it was then 7:30 a. m.—would like us to give him appointment at our earliest convenience, when he would be very glad to explain the latest endowment policy of his company.

Considerably befuddled by sleep, we listened to a dissertation on our duty to our future family and at length managed to ask who gave him our name. He explained that he had happened to see it in The Sphere. Weakly we gave in and made an appointment with him. It was as well. He sold us insurance—more than we felt we could afford, but nowhere near the amount he felt we should take for the sake of Althea and "hem—the family that may be." But we were able to tell the dozen other agents who had "happened to read" of our approaching marriage that we had already made arrangements.

Thus it began. The open season was on, and Althea, her family and our bewildered self were pursued with view halloo by a continually increasing pack of eager merchants. By mail, by telephone and by "representatives" they hounded us all—especially Althea.

They pointed out in forceful phrase, written and vocal, just what our duties were as persons about to be married. The mail of the Blank family doubled and quadrupled. The telephone clamored from morn till eventide. The Blanks' maid spoke darkly of another position and suggested bitterly that a doorman be hired.

There were letters written carefully in long-hand that you read half through before you appreciated their purpose—pleasant congratulatory missives with the sting in their tail, scorpion like. There were others not too obviously mimeographed to the same end. There were postcards on which our approaching union was proclaimed for all the world to read and advertising folders and pamphlets and treatises like unto valentines for sentimentality of picture and flamboyance of wording.

The postman, hitherto a gruff and business-like person, began to beam upon Althea in fatherlike fashion and demand in a spirit of gallantry when it was to be.

Besides these disconcerting early birds who sought by mail the unhappy worms we were

there were also persistent representatives of various firms who called in person. Merchants wrote, begging permission to send emissaries, and took the Blank family's silence for consent.

Usually you could tell the social standing of the firms these visitors represented by the way they tried to do business. The more select the customers they served the less you would ever have suspected it.

When the unhappy Blank family had listened to their congratulations and, not infrequently, their patronizing compliments on the appearance of the bride-to-be, the struggle began. They insisted firmly and the Blanks resisted desperately. Never were there people like these representatives for unwillingness to acknowledge defeat. Never were there a class more ungraceful losers.

When they had finally been ushered out you could see them shaking their heads and muttering Cassandra-like predictions as they went downstairs. It was easy to gather that they regarded the approaching union as a regrettable incident, at best.

An innocent caller approaching the Blank household would have been certain of the presence of a gambling hell behind the portal. The suspicious and long suffering maid opened it an infinitesimal crack, and through the opening demanded with evident hostility who you were and what you desired.

We grew accustomed to working our way into the home of our betrothed like a stranger at a lodge room door.

Day by day the hunt increased in numbers until we began to feel like a pair of harried foxes pursued for the sake of pelts we knew weren't worth the trouble.

On Althea fell the brunt of the attack—she who had dwelt so long on the lack of publicity that was to attend our wedding. We, ourselves, after we had fought off insurance agents and automobile salesmen and tailors' representatives, dwelt in comparative peace.

Not so our bride-to-be. Her mother suffered with her. The hunters generally used both barrels, one letter for parent and the other for daughter.

The Society Secretarial Company wished the privilege of addressing the wedding invitations. If it had offered to go over the mail of the Blank household and throw away all the advertisements I think it would have obtained a commission.

Another firm wrote a long, persuasive letter beginning:

"Upon entering the threshold of matrimony you are undoubtedly preparing for your future happiness and success."

This would be obtained, according to the letter, only if the writer were permitted to do the engraving for the invitations.

Several score communications begged the

privilege of making the trousseau. Some of these stressed the sentimental appeal.

"Is not the most important frock in a woman's lifetime her wedding gown?" one letter demanded, while another with brutal and what we believe to have been unjustified frankness began:

"Take your combinations. You need new ones, but in spite of changing fashions you still cling to the old model."

There were other counts in the indictment, but Althea coming upon us reading it snatched it away with burning comment and color.

Day by day the rolling tide came in. There were catalogues setting forth trousseaus at various prices, listed in sets in the fashion used in our youth by fireworks manufacturers. There were letters tabulating things no bride could possibly permit herself to be without—long lists beginning with asbestos pads, armures, allover laces and aprons and ending with wash cloths and window awnings.

And there were forward looking merchants who with profane hands ruthlessly ripped away the veil that had hitherto hung untouched before the future and burst with raucous shouts into the sanctuary, demanding the privilege of clothing or feeding or supplying toys for the next generation.

There were embarrassing persons who suggested novel entertainments for children's parties and a Mrs. Willis, who announced her removal to a new address, "where there will be found a delightful display of children's furniture and toys."

A dancing academy, evidently with an enormous waiting list, sent us a blank for the enrollment of our possible offspring as a pupil, and many others cast themselves with more enthusiasm than tact upon the bosom of the future.

These, however, were only a few in the horde of persons who sought to place themselves at our service. Merchants insisted on proffering us articles we had never dreamed existed.

One persistent woman, who manufactured "sanitary face cloths," by letter and in person importuned Althea to buy. She besieged the house of Blank with the fervor of a parent whose offspring is about to appear before the world with a dirty visage. Somehow she conveyed the impression that if her face cloths didn't help us nothing would.

The hotels vied with each other in extending to their hospitality (rates included).

"We beg to inform you," one manager informed us largely, "that our facilities for serving your requirements for the future are unexcelled and we cordially invite you to inspect our premises."

And the resort folders! We who had been wondering whether we'd have enough when the ceremony was over to spend two weeks in North Jersey, were bombarded by brochures and pamphlets of gift book magnificence extolling the joys of aquaplaning on the Adirondack lakes—we were to be married in October—or climbing peaks in the Rockies.

There were persons who lived only to make out our itinerary for us. There were others who were keeping open their hotels in the hope we would patronize them. There was one company who sent us a forty-page booklet extolling the value of certain pills for seasickness.

The caterers were numbered by the score after their tribes—haughty caterers, who in engraved script told us that Newport and Fifth Avenue fought for the privilege of being served by them; less renowned purveyors of wedding food, who wrote in quasi-English of the excellence of their wares and sent swarthy Mafia members to back up their claims.

These were as persistent as the other representatives who attended the Blank family each day, and more emotional. They spoke of frappe with all the fervor of Petrarch of his Laura, and you had the uncomfortable feeling while conversing with them that they all carried stilettoes and were quick to avenge affront.

Many holders of the only original recipe for

black fruit cake obtained from a well known Southern family demanded employment.

"I," one of these holders announced proudly, "have made cakes for many prominent society brides and three U. S. Presidents."

The bands and orchestras and quartets and trios that desired to supply music for the wedding would have taken in line of march several hours to pass a given point. It took at least that long to get rid of all their representatives who called.

There were Hungarian bands, balalaika orchestras, jazz quartets, coon shouters and banjo experts. Several well known vocalists—they said they were—wanted to sing to us. Most of the hotels offered to let us have their musicians if we'd be considerate enough to have the ceremony at some time when they weren't needed at the hostilities.

Belshazzar himself might have been awed at the talent assembled for the avowed purpose of making our wedding a spectacular affair. Persons engaged in refined vaudeville wrote offering to add a dash of humor to the occasion, and we also had the privilege of engaging a dyspeptic-looking mystery in a flowery kimono, who, according to the text below the photograph, would consent for a considerable consideration to "demonstrate only the scientific principles of vibration of numbers, astrology, palmistry, psychology, character reading and everything pertaining to Eastern occultism."

Gentlemen of surpassing importunity begged us to go into the movies—not as professionals, though I wonder how they resisted that after seeing Althea. They wanted us to have the wedding filmed—at some expense, of course—for the sake of our personal posterity.

"An Eternal Record of Events" was the heading on a pamphlet brought by one moving picture man whose conversational gifts gave the Blanks an entirely new impression of the silent drama. The pamphlet continued:

"Sympathetic souvenirs of events of one's life are made eternal records by the cinema. What would you give to-day to see pictures on the screen of yourself as a child with your parents? Your children and your children's children can watch at will the ceremonies of your own wedding day."

After a masterly oration to the unhappy Blanks the movie man went the grumbling way of the rest of the rejected emissaries. Sometimes we almost regret that we didn't have the ceremony filmed, though what we would do with the record we can't imagine. Our regret is not for the sake of our children's children, for the affair is really none of their business, but for our own vindication. Our memory of that awe-filled fifteen minutes is of the vaguest, and perhaps the films might have refuted the statement made at times by Althea under extreme provocation that we stood at the altar with the dash and gallant demeanor of a boiled codfish. Perhaps, after all, it is just as well that posterity is going to miss seeing our wedding.

So, through advertisements and letters of appeal and prospectuses and brochures and postcards and invitations to inspect we drifted along toward The Day, carrying on a running fight with agents of practically every one in town who had anything to sell.

On the morning of The Day we arrived at the home of the bride's parents in the traditional semi-conscious state to find that the fury that had pursued us since that potent announcement had appeared months before had done its worst at the final moment.

The peace and joy which should have hovered over the domicile on that morning had been considerably dislocated by a photographers' fight, due indirectly to the failure at the crucial moment of the Blanks to say "no" firmly enough. In consequence two camera men had appeared just as Althea was being hurried into her bridal array and each had insisted that he had the exclusive right to the bridal pictures.

The argument which ensued between the rivals was witnessed by our future family-in-law and a corps of caterers' assistants with varying degrees of horror and entertainment. It only ended when our father-in-law-to-be, reinforced by the janitor, cast two strong-armed Lucifers out of a badly dislocated paradise.

One of our first clear recollections, when it was all over was the passionately reiterated "No, no, no!" of Althea. Alarmed, we cleared our blurred eyesight and found that the remark was directed toward a letter that had just come and not to the minister, who, we saw, had completed his work. This missive contained a stamped and addressed envelope and a blank as large as a draft questionnaire, setting forth:

"The Sphere desires to print an accurate account of your wedding. Will you kindly answer the following questions and mail the reply at once to The Sphere?"

"I won't," said Althea almost tearfully. With the utmost fervor we and the harassed worn Blank family assured her that she need not.

Poor girl, she had learned by weeks of bitterness how advertising pays.

And in the case of engagement announcements as well as in melodramas, it's the woman who pays and pays and pays.

